

05 July 2023 Wednesday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

NEWS CLIPPINGS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____



DENR LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER SERVICES ON WHEELS Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga (rightmost, front) and DENR Caraga Regional Executive Director Nonito Tamayo (leftmost, front) lead the ribbon-cutting ceremony to inaugurate the DENR Services on Wheels on Friday, June 23, 2023, coinciding with the launching of Project TRANSFORM in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte. The DENR Services on Wheels is the innovative mechanism of DENR to bring its services closer to the locals of Surigao del Norte. The vehicle will roam around the province bringing personnel from the DENR, Environmental Management Bureau, and Mines and Geosciences Bureau Caraga personnel to provide the agency's essential services such as the applications for Environmental Compliance Certificate, Permit to Operate, Tree Cutting in Alienable and Disposable Lands, Transport of Forest Products, Hazardous Waste Generator Registration, Waste Water Discharge Permit, Geohazard Assessment and Mapping, and Certification for Land Status. PHOTO COURTESY OF DENR



7-05-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

No need for Boracay-like takeover of Siargao Island—DENR official

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is not keen on recommending a government takeover and closure of Siargao Island to tourism to pave the way for a massive rehabilitation similar to what was imposed during the rehabilitation of the world-renowned Boracay Island during the Duterte administration.

"If we are going to close Siargao Island to tourism, the people will suffer enormously. Tourism is their bread and butter," Nonito Tamayo, DENR Caraga regional executive director told the BUSINESSMIRROR.

Tamayo added that even DENR Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga is not in favor of a government takeover of Siargao Island,

Tamayo noted.

"After 3 years of pandemic and the devastation of typhoon Odette, it is time for the people to recover from several years of economic setbacks. Closing the island to tourists will definitely hurt them more," Tamayo said.

As for the reported water pollution in certain areas around Siargao, Tamayo said the situation is manageable.

"All we need to do is to strictly enforce the environmental laws," said Tamayo.

In Dapa, where illegal settlers have occupied coastal areas, at least 100 families would have to be relocated.

"We will closely coordinate with the concerned local government

units [LGUs] for the relocation of these communities, particularly in Dapa. It's the only area where poor water quality was detected," he said.

He noted that close to 1,000 tourism-related establishments on Siargao Island, or close to half of the total number of businesses operating on the island, have no environmental compliance certificate (ECC).

To address the problem, he said the DENR would conduct a massive information campaign and ensure compliance by erring business establishments.

Tamayo said he is recommending the reestablishment of a satellite office of the DENR on the island so that the tourism-related establishments will be able to apply for an

ECC and receive technical support.

The DENR office on the island was closed as a result of the government rationalization plan several years back. This limited the DENR's presence on the island for years, resulting in violations of various environmental laws, particularly the Clean Water Act.

"In the meantime, we will mobilize our DENR Services on Wheels on the island. We will bring the DENR closer to the people," he said.

Known as the surfing capital of the Philippines, Siargao is a tourism magnet. The island also hosts the fourth largest Protected Area in the Philippines called Siargao Island Protected Landscape and Seascape (SIPLAS). Jonathan L. Mayuga



07-05-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

'Last forest bastion': Lanao del Norte's Mt. Inayawan is 53rd Asean Heritage Park

THE Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park (MIRNP), a protected area (PA) situated in the province of Lanao del Norte, has been declared the 53rd Asean Heritage Park (AHP) and the 11th PA in the Philippines to earn such distinction.

The MIRNP was launched as an AHP during the 64th Araw ng Lanao del Norte celebration on June 28.

MIRNP is known as the "last forest bastion" in the province for being the only primary remaining and largest rainforest dominated by dipterocarp species and containing high diversity of flora and fauna. It is the primary water source of surrounding and nearby communities and municipalities.

It is home to the indigenous people of Maranao.

"Mt. Inayawan's forests and biodiversity are still intact; hence it is now an AHP. This will give the Maranao people an increased sense of deep pride and responsibility to further protect and preserve it," Ismail C. Ambola, incumbent MIRNP park superintendent said in a statement.

Some of the endemic species found in MIRNP are the endangered Pinkske's hawk eagle (*Nisaetus pinskeri*), the critically endangered Philippine eagle, the vulnerable tree species Magkono (*Xanthostemon verdugonianus*), and the Philippine flying lemur (*Cynocephalus volans*).

"We commend the support of all stakeholders, particularly the Provincial Government of Lanao del Norte and the local government of Nunungan in the participatory governance of the Park contributing to its sustainable PA management," Dr. Arvin C. Diesmos, senior director of the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), secretariat of the AHP Programme, said for his part.

"The distinction of Mt. Inayawan Range Natural Park as an Asean Heritage Park is a great honor," said Lanao del Norte Governor Imelda Dimaporo. "Together, let us stand as guardians of nature, protectors of our heritage, and advocates for a greener and healthier planet," she added.

Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim, ACB executive director, lauded and welcomed MIRNP to the growing network of AHP.

She expressed ACB's readiness to support the park's conservation efforts and to help ensure the effective and efficient management of this new AHP. Since its establishment in 1984, the AHP Programme has declared 55 PAs as part of the AHP network. These heritage sites are biologically rich parks and nature reserves that serve as models of effective PA management and conservation. **Jonathan L. Mayuga**



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE



07-05-23

TITLE: _____

PAGE _____

DATE _____

Mayon ashfall reaches 2 more areas

Increased seismic activity was observed in Mayon Volcano in the past 24 hours, with ashfall reported in two more areas in Albay.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said six dome-collapse pyroclastic density currents generated ashfall that reached parts of Guinobatan town and Ligao City.

"Based on the current prevailing wind pattern, ashfall events may likely occur on the south side of the volcano," Phivolcs said.

Over the weekend, ashfall was monitored in parts of Tabaco City.

Up to 257 rockfall events and continuous moderate degassing from the summit crater that produced steam-laden plumes rising up to 200 meters were also observed.

State seismologists monitored a series of volcanic earthquakes with increasing strength.

Sulfur dioxide emissions rose to 1,558 tons per day.

"This current phase of unrest is likely driven by magmatic gas activity within the edifice," Phivolcs said.

Ban settlements within danger zone

Meanwhile, Albay disaster management officials are seeking the enactment of a law that will prohibit settlements within Mayon's six-kilometer permanent danger zone.

The Albay Public Safety and Emergency Office (APSEMO) said it has to order the evacuation of more than 5,000 families or 25,000 people every time Mayon's alert level is raised to three and more than 60,000 families when the volcano is under Alert Level 4 or 5.

"We started the relocation of Mayon evacuees as early as 1993... but it did not solve the problem with people inhabiting the permanent danger zone," APSEMO head Cedric Daep told **The STAR**.

He lamented that some evacuees have been sneaking back into the danger zone when the volcano's condition appeared to have normalized.

There were also cases of evacuees who sold their houses at relocation sites and returned to their residences at the foot of Mayon.

Daep said Republic Act 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act declares Mayon as a protected area being a mountain or a forest reserve, but not as a volcano.

Claudio Yucot, director of the Office of Civil Defense in Bicol, said there is no valid reason to justify settlement within the permanent danger zone.

- Romina Cabrera, Cet Dematera



07-05-23



PAGE

DATE

Pagasa declares onset of El Niño

By ROMINA CABRERA and DANESSA RIVERA

A severe dry spell looms in the country with the onset of the El Niño phenomenon, the impact of which would be felt toward the end of the year, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said in an advisory yesterday.

"Recent PAGASA climate monitoring and analyses indicate that the unusual warming of sea surface temperatures along the equatorial Pacific that was established in March 2023 has further developed into a weak El Niño, which show signs of strengthening in the coming months," PAGASA said.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) yesterday said the El Niño weather pattern emerged in the tropical Pacific for the

Turn to Page 4

Pagasa From Page 1

first time in seven years.

El Niño is linked to extreme weather conditions from tropical cyclones to heavy rainfall to severe droughts.

State weather forecasters said El Niño, characterized by the rise of sea surface temperatures in the central equatorial Pacific, will be moderate to strong and will persist until the first quarter of 2024.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) said it has set in place measures to cushion the impact of the dry spell on water supply and on food security.

Camarines Norte and Southern Leyte are expected to experience drought conditions, or below normal rainfall conditions for three to five months, by December.

In Luzon, 26 areas may experience drought conditions by January 2024, while a total of 17 provinces may experience dry spell, or below normal rainfall conditions for two to three consecutive months.

State weather forecasters said the number of affected provinces may still increase as projections are based on current models.

With El Niño, fewer tropical cyclones are expected to enter the Philippine area of responsibility (PAR) this year.

From a yearly average of 19-20 cyclones, only around 10-14 cyclones are expected to enter PAR next year. However, cyclones with stronger character may be experienced.

Still, normal to above normal rainfall conditions are expected to continue from this month to September in most parts of the country due to the prevailing northwest monsoon.

Esperanza Cuyanan, PAGASA officer-in-charge, warned that the adverse impact of El Niño may be fully felt by the next dry season in the country,

especially in terms of water shortages.

Water levels in dams in the country may go down starting November until January 2024, according to forecast. She advised the public to conserve water and electricity while it is still early.

"The worst that we can experience is dry season next year when water saved during this rainy season runs out. We'll have shortage next year during the dry season," Cuyanan said in Filipino.

PAGASA clarified that its El Niño advisory is based on three-month average of sea surface temperature anomalies of above 0.5 degree Celsius.

Angat level

Water level of Angat Dam, meanwhile, has further dropped to near critical level but water concessionaires assured the public of continued water service.

Latest PAGASA monitoring showed Angat's water level at 181.53 meters as of 8 a.m. yesterday, 0.36 meters lower than 181.93 meters a day earlier and only 1.57 meters from the critical level of 180 meters.

Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) division manager Patrick Dizon said they would meet with PAGASA, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) to discuss the problem.

"Under the Angat Dam protocol, when the reservoir elevation reaches 180 meters, the water allocation of irrigation will be reduced to prioritize domestic water supply," he said.

"We are going to see PAGASA's projection of rainfall in watershed areas, if there will be intense rain to help raise the elevation of the reservoir," Dizon said.

The MWSS has yet to determine the amount of water allocation it will request from the NWRB.

"For now, we can't say what level

of raw water allocation we will ask because we need to manage the current water levels in the Angat reservoir," Dizon said.

West zone concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. said it has a program in place to mitigate the possible impact of El Niño.

"This involves the production of additional supply through alternative raw water sources, and through water loss recovery from our pipe replacement and leak repair activities," Maynilad corporate communications head Jennifer Rufo said.

"As we work closely with MWSS to augment available supplies, we call on all water consumers to help by using water responsibly," Rufo said.

Currently, Maynilad is still assessing the actual impact of the reduction of Angat water allocation to 50 cubic meters per second (CMS) on its service levels this month.

"Having said that, even if a 50 CMS allocation will have an impact on service levels this July, the water situation would be better now compared to how it was last April 1 to 15 when the allocation was also at 50 CMS and there were service interruptions," Rufo said.

"This is because we now have rains over the watersheds, and our various supply augmentation projects (i.e., reactivation of deep wells, recovery of water losses and production of potable reused water) have already been generating additional supply," the Maynilad official said.

East zone concessionaire Manila Water Company Inc. said it has been preparing its supply augmentation measures long before the official declaration of El Niño's onset.

Part of the measures is drawing 110 million liters per day (MLD) from Laguna Lake through its Cardona Water Treatment Plant, Manila Water corporate communication affairs group director Jeric Sevilla said.

Manila Water is also tapping deep wells, which are ready to supply up to a maximum of 115 MLD.

"We have also completed Phase 1 of our Calawis Project in Antipolo which will give around 20 MLD and scalable up to 80 MLD while Phase 2 of our East Bay Water Supply Project which can provide 50 MLD drawing water from the eastern flank of Laguna Lake. 15 MLD from our Marikina Portable Treatment Plant is also available," Sevilla said.

Food supply

At a press briefing, DA director for Field Operations Service U-Nichols Manalo said they have prepared a whole-of-government approach in dealing with El Niño in compliance with President Marcos' directive.

"The President made the instruction of a whole of government approach, science based, we're preparing for it. We should not respond only when the problem is already here in December and January or when there is already drought in 26 provinces," Manalo said at a briefing.

The DA is the lead agency in the food security group under the national El Niño team, composed of different government agencies.

Manalo said that they are also coordinating with local government units, irrigation associations and rice farmers in preparation for the El Niño.

He noted that some areas in Davao del Sur experiencing below average rainfall have started planting their crops earlier to adjust to changing weather conditions.

The DA official said the NIA has also started repairs and maintenance of its irrigation systems.

The DA is also part of the water and health security groups, through its attached agencies and bureaus like NIA and the Bureau of Animal Industry.

- With Reuters



07-05-23

TITLE :

PAGE

DATE



NEWS

Wrong mangroves, groups tell local gov't

A coalition of environmentalists stressed the importance of consulting experts and conducting scientific studies, as they called out the Catanduanes provincial government for planting a type of mangroves not suited to the chosen site of a recent coastal greening project. The initiative, though well-intentioned, may end up wasting government resources, according to Mangrove Matters PH. —STORY BY KRIXIA SUBINGSUBING

A5

Mind your mangroves: Green groups cite wasteful project

By Krixia Subingsubing
@krixiasINQ

A coalition of environmentalists has called out the Catanduanes provincial government for planting the wrong mangrove species during a recent tree planting activity, citing it as a wasteful exercise.

In a letter addressed to the province's environment and natural resources office, at least eight environmental groups led by Raise for Habitat also asked whether a baseline study was made or consultations with the community and local experts were conducted prior to the project.

"We recognize your initiative, but [we] hope to stop the government from wasting more resources by issuing effective and coherent regulations, and establishing provincial-wide protocols for proper mangrove planting and zonation," the groups said in the letter sent on Monday.

In a social post on June 21, the Catanduanes provincial government reported about its mangrove planting activity at Barangay Bon-ot, San Andres town.

Being an island province, Catanduanes—or its coastal communities—is vulnerable to storm surges and sea level rise, hazards that can be mitigated by mangrove forests, according to Emman Tayo, chief campaigner of Raise for Habitat.

Low survival rate

However, conservationist groups noticed that the volunteers planted the *Rhizophora* variety—known as "bakhaw babae" among the locals—at a seaward zone alongside two other mangrove types, the *Sonneratia* ("pagatpat") and *Avicennia* ("bungalon"). The seaward zone refers to sandy areas that can host plants high-

ly adaptable to saline water.

Mangrove Matters PH founder and copetitioner Matthew Tabilog explained that the *Rhizophora* species usually thrives in the midward zone, a muddy area with lower salinity.

When planted in the wrong zone, *Rhizophoras* will likely have a lower survival rate and end up "competing" with the other existing mangroves.

Tayo said *Rhizophora* is especially vulnerable to barnacle infestation, which can spread to the other mangroves and ultimately kill them.

"So what they did was 'planting by convenience' and it's possible they didn't know about the mangrove zonation," Tabilog said. "To think that the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) is the highest authority in conservation, it's really ironic that they're doing this kind of thing."

Based on estimates, plant-

ing 50 propagules or seedlings of mangroves cost at least P10,000.

Proper protocols

"This letter is really a call to action for efficient resource use and conservation of mangroves," he said. "We want to normalize proper protocols because for sure there will be many government and private-led mangrove planting activities and this is not the first time we've encountered (malpractices)."

Local governments, he said, are advised to do baseline studies and consultations first to make sure they are planting species suitable for their local mangrove zones.

As to the seedlings that were already planted, Tabilog suggested that they be transferred to a nursery first and had them replanted in the right zone once they've grown a meter high. INQ



STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND
INITIATIVES
SERVICE

B3
PAGE

UPPER
 LOWER

PAGE 1
STORY

BANNER
STORY

EDITORIAL

CARTOON

07-05-23

TITLE :

PAGE

DATE

UN body OKs release of Fukushima water

IAEA sees 'negligible radiological impact' on people and the environment

TOKYO—Japan won approval from the UN's nuclear watchdog on Tuesday for its plan to release into the ocean treated radioactive water from the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima plant, despite fierce resistance from Beijing and some residents.

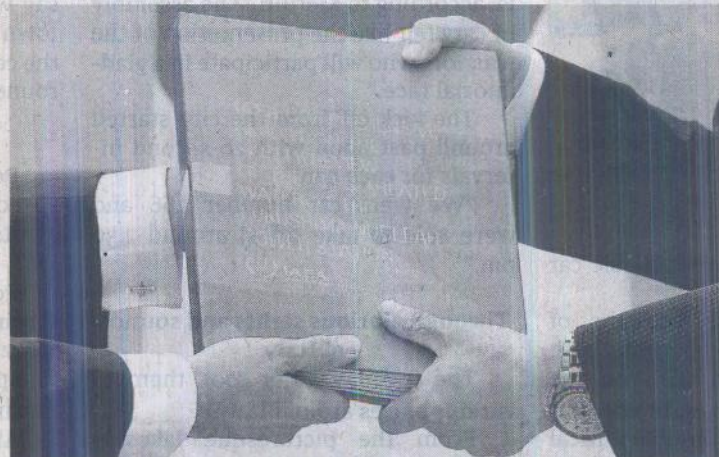
After a two-year review, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Japan's plans were consistent with global safety standards and that they would have a "negligible radiological impact to people and the environment."

"This is a very special night," IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told Prime Minister Fumio Kishida before handing him a thick blue folder containing the final report.

Grossi later told reporters at the Japan National Press Club, where he was met by a small group of protesters, that he would seek to allay lingering concerns and would station IAEA staff at the Fukushima plant to monitor the release.

"We have to recognize that such a thing has not happened before," he said, adding that Japan would have the final say on the release, which is due to span 30 to 40 years.

Japan's government maintains the process is safe as it has treated the water—enough



BLUE BOOK IAEA chief Rafael Mariano Grossi (left) presents to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida his agency's report on the release into the ocean of Fukushima's treated water.

—REUTERS

to fill 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools—used to cool the fuel rods of the Fukushima plant after it was damaged by the earthquake and resulting tsunami.

Final word

Japan has not specified a date to start the water release pending official approval from the national nuclear regulatory body for Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco), whose final word on the plan unveiled in 2021 could come as early as this week.

Japanese fishing unions

have long opposed the plan, saying it would undo work to repair reputations after several countries banned some Japanese food products after the 2011 disaster.

A petition from the regions around the plant has garnered more than 250,000 signatures since the proposal was first made.

Some neighboring countries have also complained over the years about the threat to the marine environment and public health, with Beijing emerging as the biggest critic.

"Japan will continue to pro-

vide explanations to the Japanese people and the international community in a sincere manner based on scientific evidence and with a high level of transparency," Kishida said as he met with Grossi.

Through its embassy in Japan, Beijing said the IAEA report cannot be a "pass" for the water release and called for the plan's suspension.

Tritium

Japan says the water has been filtered to remove most radioactive elements except for tritium, an isotope of hydrogen that is difficult to separate from water.

The treated water will be diluted to well below internationally approved levels of tritium before being released into the Pacific.

In a presentation given to foreign journalists in China last month, Japanese officials said tritium levels in the treated water are lower than those found in wastewater regularly released by nuclear plants around the world, including in China.

The officials said they had made multiple and repeated attempts to explain the science behind Tokyo's stance to Beijing, but their offers had been ignored. —REUTERS